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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 002686

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2017
TAGS: PARM PGOV PREL KNNP MNUC IAEA UN IR BL
SUBJECT: LA PAZ ON IRANIAN NUKE: SEE NO EVIL

REF: A. LA PAZ 2626
B. LA PAZ 2663
C. LA PAZ 2587

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca defended Iran's nuclear program October 3, contrasting Iran's development of "peaceful" nuclear technology with countries like France, Russia, Israel, and the United States that use the technology to make "atomic bombs." He also lumped Iran in with neighbors Brazil and Argentina, which are developing nuclear technology. Choquehuanca emphasized Bolivia's support for Iran's nuclear program was consistent with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is referred to in a Bolivian/Iranian joint statement released during Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's September 27 visit to La Paz. Choquehuanca responded to feminist criticism of Bolivia's new ties with Iran by explaining Iranian women were "treated better" than Bolivian women, composed 65 percent of university students, and held prominent positions in government. Editorial writers and politicians have criticized the new relationship, often implying government ignorance regarding Iran's nuclear intentions, the relations does not justify the risk to international relations and is a result of Venezuelan meddling.

¶2. (C) A prominent opposition Senator told PolOff Oct. 3 that the opposition-controlled senate would fight the "idea of relations with Iran" when called upon to approve an eventual Iranian ambassadorial nominee. When asked if this would be similar to the senate's refection of a Spanish Ambassadorial candidate, he noted in that case they found an eventual compromise candidate, in the case of an Iranian nominee "there will never be anyone we will agree to." He added the opposition and even some MAS deputies have not had a substantive opportunity to register their opposition to Iranian relations, a decision that parliamentary leaders have only been able to "react to" so far.

¶3. (C) Comment: The Bolivian Government appears to be hardening its stance regarding the Iranian nuclear program. Within half a year they've gone from denying they would pursue formal relations with Iran to emphasizing the

commercial aspects of a relationship to embracing Iran's "right" to nukes. Although it is written into the September 27 joint statement that Bolivia's support of Iran's nuclear program is "within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," the passage only exposes the Bolivian Government's weak understanding of the agreement and international diplomacy in general. The Bolivian/Iranian statement likewise allows for only "peaceful" nuclear energy, but Post (and we suspect the UN and IAEA) are less than convinced. That Choquehuanca would use this public relations statement (complete below) to link Bolivia's Iran policy with accordance to international agreements, let alone use it to criticize the U.S. for having nuclear weapons, plainly shows a lack of understanding about what "non-proliferation" means.

Bolivia signed the NPT, but Choquehuanca's reliance on his own interpretations of international treaties casts serious doubt on whether Bolivia will honor international obligations, as evidenced by recent behavior at the IAEA (ref c). It is difficult to understand why the Foreign Minister went out of his way to unfavorably compare Bolivia's treatment of women with Iran, though it should serve to distract editorial writers from his October 1 comments condoning child labor and the sexuality of rocks (ref b).

End Comment.

¶4. (U) Compete joint statement released by Bolivia and Iran
September 27, 2007.

Among other commitments, the Iranian and Bolivia governments reiterated their commitment to promoting political actions aimed at building a multi-polar world on behalf of guaranteeing a stronger balance and democratization of international relations.

Also, they congratulated each other for the changes and positive trends that can be seen in Latin America with the rise an consolidation of democratic governments that oppose neo-liberalism, that promote social politics, as well as the genuine Latin American integration and cooperation.

They highlighted the right of the countries to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, as a means that can significantly contribute to (meeting) their peoples' economic and technological development needs.

Likewise, they agreed to prepare an industrial cooperation plan for the next five years for an amount of \$1 billion dollars. They are committed to providing (to Bolivia) \$100 million to develop the projects singed by the Ministers of Hydrocarbons, Rural Development, and Production.

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